

Major Bible Themes

BY

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CHAPTER XXIII

MAN: HIS CREATION

Discovering himself in the midst of a wonderful universe and being the highest order of its visible creatures, it is natural that man should seek to understand his own origin as well as the origin of all existing things; yet man, unaided, can discover nothing as to his origin. It is therefore reasonable to expect that God would reveal these facts to man. This He has done in the Bible. However, since God is revealed and becomes real only to those who are saved through Christ (Matt. 11:27-29), men who are not saved and to whom God is not real have turned from the Scripture records of the origin of all things, and have sought to account for existing things on the basis of supposed laws of evolution. According to these human theories, there was originally a primordial cell from which has evolved every existing form of life whether it be whale or hummingbird, elephant or mosquito, man or tadpole. Over against these theories are the clear teachings of the Scriptures, wherein it is not only directly stated (Gen. 1:1 to 2:25; Col. 1:16; Heb. 11:3), but it is everywhere implied, that every living thing was created by the immediate power and will of God.

As to their theories concerning the origin of things, men are thus divided into two general classes. It is not a division between learned and unlearned men, or between good and bad men; but it is a division between men to whom God is sufficiently real and those to whom He is not sufficiently real to be accepted as the Creator of all things. There is an unalterable law which accounts for the capacity or incapacity of man to grasp the things of God (1 Cor. 2:12, 14; John 3:3). "By faith we understand" (Heb. 11:3); but the man without faith does not understand, nor can he ever understand until he is saved in Christ. And since the unregenerate cannot understand, God has commissioned the Gospel to be preached to them rather than a ministry of useless controversy.

According to the testimony of the Scriptures (which testimony every Christian will receive, since he is indwelt by the same Spirit who wrote the Scriptures -- 1 Cor. 2:12), man, in his present human form, was created by God as the conclusion and consummation of all creation. Of man it is said that he was made in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26), and that God breathed into him the breath of life (Gen. 2:7). These distinctions classify man above all other forms of life which are upon the earth.

Speaking generally, man's creation included that which was material -- "the dust" (symbolizing the use of elements appropriate to the forming of a material body), and immaterial -- "the breath of life." This general two-fold distinction is elsewhere indicated as the "outward man" and the "inward man" (2 Cor. 4:16); "the earthen vessel" and "this treasure" (2 Cor. 4:7). Likewise, contemplating the soul or spirit as representing that which is immaterial in man, we read that the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit unto God who gave it (Eccles. 12:7); and there are those who are able to kill the body who are not able to kill the soul (Matt. 10:28). It was when God breathed the breath of life into the material body that man became a "living soul" (Gen. 2:7; note, also, 2 Cor. 5:8; 3 John 1:2).

1. When considering the immaterial part of man, it should be observed that the Scriptures, while sometimes using the terms interchangeably (Comp. Gen. 41:8 with Psa. 42:6; John 12:27 with 13:21; Matt. 20:28 with 27:50; Heb. 12:23 with Rev. 6:9), even applying these terms to God on the one hand (Isa. 42:1; Jer. 9:9; Heb. 10:38), and to the brute creation on the other hand (Eccles. 3:21; Rev. 16:3), do distinguish between the spirit and the soul of man (1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 4:12). Though the highest functions of the immaterial part of man are sometimes attributed to the spirit and sometimes to the soul (Mark 8:36, 37; 12:30; Luke 1:46; Heb. 6:18, 19; Jas. 1:21), the spirit is usually mentioned in the Scriptures as that part of man which is capable of contemplating God, and the soul as that part of man which is related to self and the various functions of the intellect, sensibilities and will.

There are three main theories as to the origin of the soul and spirit:

(1) The Pre-existence theory, which contends that the soul and spirit of man have existed eternally, and is only incarnated in the body at the beginning of the human existence. This doctrine is not held by evangelical bodies.

(2) The Creation theory, which contends that the soul and spirit of man are directly and individually created by God at the beginning of human existence. This theory, though held by

some evangelical Christians, fails, since by it the body alone is supposed to be propagated, and therefore is solely responsible for the continuance of the effect of the Fall.

(3) The Traducian theory, which contends that the soul and spirit, like the body, were potentially created in Adam, and are alike propagated by the natural laws of generation. This theory is Biblical. God is said to have breathed only once into man the breath of life, and after this He ceased creation (Gen. 2:2). Thus, and only thus, the fall of man, which so evidently affects the soul and spirit, is transmitted from generation to generation.

2. When considering the Scripture teaching regarding the material part of man, we note certain facts:

(1) The terms "the body" and "the flesh" are not synonymous. The body is only the house of the soul, while the flesh (when that term is used in its ethical sense) includes spirit, soul, and body -- or all that composes the unregenerate man.

(2) The body of the saved one is especially considered (2 Cor. 5:6, 8; 12:2, 3; Jas. 2:26). It is a "temple" (1 Cor. 6:19; John 2:21; Phil. 1:20), an "earthen vessel" (2 Cor. 4:7), a body of limitations (Phil. 2:21), to be mortified (Rom. 8:13; Col. 3:5), it was buffeted by Paul (1 Cor. 9:27), and it is to be changed at the return of Christ (1 Cor. 15:51-53). The body, as well as the soul or spirit, is to be sanctified, saved, redeemed, and finally glorified forever (Luke 24:39; Rom. 8:13; 1 Cor. 6:13-20; Phil. 3:20, 21), This mortal shall put on immortality, and this corruptible shall put on incorruption.

(3) Mention is also made of Christ's physical body, which was "broken" for us, and His spiritual body, which is the Church.

QUESTIONS

1. Is unaided man able to discover anything concerning the origin of things?

2. a. Not knowing God nor being able to make Him real, what is the best solution of the origin of things that the unregenerate have proposed?

b. What is the teaching of the Scriptures with regard to the origin of all things?

c. If it is not a question of human learning, on what principle are men divided?

3. a. Where in the order of creation did man appear?

b. Into what image and likeness was he created?

4. a. What is the general two-fold distinction concerning man?

b. Indicate the contrasts between these factors as set forth in the Scriptures.

5. a. What Scriptures distinguish between the soul and spirit in man?
 - b. Does it follow that soul and spirit are identical because sometimes used interchangeably for the immaterial part of man?
 - c. What may be said of the soul and what of the spirit of man?
6. a. Name the three theories as to the origin of the soul and spirit.
 - b. Which of these theories is Biblical?
7. Distinguish between the body and the flesh as used in the Scriptures.
8. What is said in the Scriptures regarding the body of the Christian?
9. What great change is promised this body?
10. What is the meaning of mortal and immortal?
11. What is the meaning of corruptible and incorruptible?
12. Name two uses of the word body as belonging to Christ.
13. For whom was His physical body broken?
14. What do you understand to be the spiritual body of Christ (see Eph. 1:22, 23)?